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ABSTRACT

Ways that presidential search committees of colleges can avoid common errors are discussed. The following suggestions are offered: (1) begin with institutional self-assessment; (2) carefully select search committee members; (3) avoid the appearance of wired jobs; (4) provide enough published information to candidates; (5) provide strong logistical coordination of campus visits; (6) save requests for extensive personal information until last; (7) maintain confidentiality; (8) let honesty govern above all else; (9) check references in an above board manner; and (10) keep the candidate posted until the end. It is suggested that a search committee of 10-12 representatives of the faculty, administration, and student body is about the right size. When there are viable internal candidates for a position, their presence should be mentioned to outside candidates before they arrive on campus. Promising candidates should be provided institutional data summaries and information to provide them a good idea of the campus and its problems. A support person is needed to coordinate the frequent communications and details. Students should be included in the search process. (SW)

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THE SEARCH PROCESS:
THE CANDIDATE'S PERSPECTIVE ON AVOIDING COMMON INSTITUTIONAL ERRORS

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THE SEARCH PROCESS:
THE CANDIDATE'S PERSPECTIVE ON AVOIDING COMMON INSTITUTIONAL ERRORS

FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF A CANDIDATE, HOW WELL A SEARCH COMMITTEE DOES IS NOT DEPENDENT, FOR THE MOST PART, ON THE FINAL OUTCOME. MOST CANDIDATE'S KNOW THAT THE ODDS OF BEING SELECTED FOR A GIVEN POSITION ARE AGAINST THEM BY A PROBABLE RANGE OF 50 TO 1 TO 250 TO 1 - - DEPENDING UPON THE PARTICULAR OPENING. MOST CANDIDATES ARE REASONABLE PEOPLE. THEY RECOGNIZE WITH ROBERT KAFFER, THAT "PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH COMMITTEES ARE TYPICALLY COMPOSED OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE NEVER DONE IT BEFORE."[1] THEY ALSO KNOW THAT A CERTAIN LEVEL OF SUBJECTIVITY IS INHERENT IN MAKING DIFFICULT EVALUATIVE JUDGMENTS.

WHAT MOST CANDIDATES ARE LOOKING FOR IS A HIGH LEVEL OF PROCEDURAL "FAIRNESS." I AM PROPOSING THAT FAIRNESS IS DEMONSTRATED LARGELY BY THE AVOIDANCE OF COMMON BLUNDERS THAT SUGGEST ARBITRARY DECISION MAKING; HAPHAZARD AND CASUAL TREATMENT OF CANDIDATES; AND THE PROJECTION OF UNREASONABLE

SETS OF EXPECTATIONS.

WE KNOW THERE ARE SERIOUS PROBLEMS WHEN THE VALIDITY OF HIGHLY VISIBLE PRESIDENTIAL SEARCHES IS SUSPECT. FREDERICK NESS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH SERVICE, IS QUOTED AS OBSERVING THAT "SELECTING THE COLLEGE PRESIDENT IS OFTEN SO HAPHAZARD AS TO BE LUDICROUS."[2] KIERSH SIMILARLY OBSERVES:

> ACCORDING TO ONE PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT, WHO HAS SUPERVISED OVER FORTY SEARCHES, "ALL PRESIDENTIAL CHOICES ARE LIKE A MAD GAMBLING TRIP TO LAS VEGAS - - YOU ARE BANKING ALL YOUR RESOURCES ON WHAT IS REALLY AN UNKNOWN, HIGH-RISK ENTITY."[3]

IF THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS IN THE SELECTION OF CAMPUS PRESIDENTS, WE CAN IMAGINE WHAT HAPPENS DURING SEARCHES FOR LOWER-LEVEL POSITIONS.

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE CANDIDATE, "FAIRNESS" IS BEST DEMONSTRATED BY A SEARCH COMMITTEE THAT GOES ABOUT FINDING THE

RIGHT "MATCH" BETWEEN THE CANDIDATE AND THE INSTITUTION - - RATHER THAN THE "BEST" PERSON IN SOME ABSTRACT SENSE. IN HIS ARTICLE, "THE SEARCH FOR DOCTOR PERFECT," GLENN WILLIAMS OBSERVES, "WHEN BOSTON UNIVERSITY'S SEARCH COMMITTEE WOUND UP WITH ITS RECIPE FOR [A] PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IN 1970, ONE TRUSTEE SAID: 'IF JESUS CHRIST HAD APPLIED, HE WOULDN'T HAVE MADE IT.'"[4] IN A SOMEWHAT SIMILIAR VAIN, BYRON EVANS WRITES ABOUT COMMUNITY COLLEGE SELECTION CRITERIA: ". . . [THEY] COULD NOT POSSIBLY CONSIDER HENRY KISSINGER OR CHARLES PERCY [FOR A PRESIDENCY] BECAUSE THEY HAVE NOT 'TAUGHT FOR THREE YEARS IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND ADMINISTERED SAME AT THE LEVEL OF DEAN OR BETTER.'"[5] RONALD ABRELL ADDS, "POSITION PROFILES TEND TO BE INCOMPREHENSIBLY GENERAL, VAPIDLY VAGUE AND . . . CALL FOR THE 'SUPER-HUMAN SCHOLAR - SAINT' WHO SEEMS TO HAVE DISAPPEARED SINCE THE LIKES OF ALBERT SCHWEITZER."[6]

IN SUGGESTING WHAT SEARCH COMMITTEES CAN DO TO AVOID THE MOST COMMON BLUNDERS I HAVE OBSERVED (MANY OF WHICH ARE REFERENCED

IN THE LITERATURE), I WOULD SUGGEST THE FOLLOWING TEN POINTS:

(1) BEGIN WITH INSTITUTIONAL SELF-ASSESSMENT

BEFORE A SEARCH IS FORMALLY BEGUN, THOSE WHO ARE DIRECTING THE PROCESS, MUST IDENTIFY (A) WHAT THEY MOST WANT AND (B) WHICH CHARACTERISTICS THEY MAY BE WILLING TO DO WITHOUT. THE COMMISSION ON STRENGTHENING PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP, IN ITS RECENT REPORT, GIVES US AN EXCELLENT STARTING POINT. TO GET A GOOD MATCH IT ASKS FOR AN APRIORI "INSTITUTIONAL SELF-EXAMINATION."[7] I BELIEVE THAT THIS INTERNAL INVENTORY NEED NOT BE LENGTHY BUT IT SHOULD BE REALISTIC ENOUGH TO IDENTIFY THOSE TRAITS THAT MAY BE RANKED LOWER THAN TOP LEADERSHIP REQUIREMENTS. IF NOTHING IS AT THE BOTTOM OF A LIST (AS IS OFTEN THE CASE WHEN ALL CHARACTERISTICS ARE UNRANKED) THE PROPENSITY LATER ON IS TO BECOME CONFUSED ABOUT WHAT A GIVEN CAMPUS REALLY WANTS. SOME SCHOOLS HAVE GONE SO FAR AS TO MATHEMATICALLY WEIGHT DESIRABLE LEADERSHIP QUALITIES BEFORE GOING

PUBLIC WITH THEIR SEARCH. I BELIEVE THIS IS A GOOD WAY TO BEGIN A SEARCH - - ALTHOUGH, AT SOME LATTER STAGE IN THE PROCESS, THE SEARCH COMMITTEE MIGHT LIKE TO RECONSIDER ANY POINT SYSTEM THAT HAD BEEN SET UP AT THE OUTSET. FINALISTS, FOR EXAMPLE, MIGHT BE ASSESSED SOMEWHAT DIFFERENTLY FROM FIRST CUT CANDIDATES. WEIGHTED SYSTEMS SHOULD BE USED AS GUIDELINES, NOT AS PROCEDURAL STRAIGHTJACKETS FROM WHICH PRELIMINARY JUDGMENTS BECOME IRREVERSIBLE.

(2) CAREFULLY SELECT SEARCH COMMITTEE MEMBERS

NOT EVERYBODY ON CAMPUS NEEDS TO BELONG TO A SEARCH COMMITTEE THE WORLD COURT NEEDS NOT BE RECREATED IN EACH INSTITUTION. SEARCH COMMITTEES WITH TWENTY-FIVE OR THIRTY MEMBERS ARE SIMPLY UNWIELDY AND ARE HIGHLY PRONE TO FACTIONALISM. INSTEAD OF PLACATING EVERY MEMBER OF EVERY CAMPUS FACTION, WHAT SUPER-LARGE COMMITTEES ACTUALLY TEND TO DO IS TO INSTITUTIONALIZE INFIGHTING AT THE VERY TIME WHEN STATESMANSHIP IS MOST NEEDED. ON THE OTHER HAND, OF COURSE, A HIGHLY SKEWED SEARCH COMMITTEE OF FIVE

OR FEWER MEMBERS GENERATES SUSPICION THAT A RUBBER STAMP IS ALL THAT IS WANTED BY THE POWERS THAT BE. AS A RULE OF THUMB (WHILE NO NUMBER IS MAGIC) I BELIEVE A SEARCH COMMITTEE OF TEN TO TWELVE HIGHLY REGARDED INDEPENDENT-MINDED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FACULTY, ADMINISTRATION, AND STUDENT BODY APPROACHES A REASONABLE SIZE - - PARTICULARLY IF FACULTY MEMBERS ARE SLIGHTLY OVER REPRESENTED IN THE PROCESS. IN CHOOSING "WISE" PEOPLE FOR THE COMMITTEE I WOULD SUGGEST THAT ONE CRITERION BE THEIR LIKELIHOOD OF ATTENDING ALL MEETINGS. I HAVE BEEN AMAZED AT THE HIGH RATE OF ABSENTEEISM OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE AGREED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SELECTION PROCESS.

THE SELECTION OF CONSIDERATE, "OTHER-DIRECTED" PEOPLE TENDS TO MINIMIZE THE CHANCES OF KIERSH'S WORRY THAT " . . . SEARCH MEETINGS SOMETIMES RESEMBLE A UNITED NATIONS DEBATE BETWEEN THE ARABS AND THE ISRAELIS."[8] WHEN RIGHTEOUS PERSONALITIES SIT AROUND A SEARCH COMMITTEE TABLE THE PROSPECT FOR A CANDIDATE BEING CAUGHT IN THE CROSS FIRE IS UNFORTUNATELY ENHANCED. I REMEMBER

ONE INSTANCE WHERE, BEFORE I (AS THE CANDIDATE) HAD A CHANCE TO SAY A WORD, VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE INTERVIEWING TEAM WENT AT ONE ANOTHER FOR APPROXIMATELY TWENTY-FIVE MINUTES.

(3) AVOID THE VERY APPEARANCE OF WIRED JOBS

EVEN WHEN A POSITION IS NOT "WIRED" FOR AN INSIDER, IT IS MOST FRUSTRATING FOR CANDIDATES WHO LEAVE BUSY SCHEDULES BEHIND IN ORDER TO FREIGHT THEMSELVES FROM ONE END OF THE COUNTRY TO ANOTHER, ONLY TO SUSPECT A SHAM. I WILL NOT EVEN ADDRESS THE ETHICS OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS THAT SET-UP HOOPS ONLY FOR COSMETIC AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PURPOSES. BUT I WOULD SUGGEST THAT ADVERTISING ONCE IN THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH IF YOU GENUINELY WISH TO GET THE MESSAGE OUT THAT YOUR SCHOOL IS, INDEED, IN THE MARKET FOR A WIDE-RANGE OF CANDIDATES - - MANY OF WHOM MIGHT BE MINORITIES AND/OR WOMEN. I WOULD ALSO RECOMMEND THAT, WHERE THERE ARE VIABLE INTERNAL CANDIDATES FOR A POSITION, THEIR PRESENCE (NOT THEIR NAMES) SHOULD BE MENTIONED TO OUTSIDE CANDIDATES

BEFORE THEY ARRIVE ON CAMPUS. THERE IS NO SENSE IN HIDING THE FACT WHEN SUCH INFORMATION IS LIKELY TO GET BACK TO THE VISITOR ANYWAY. THE TRICK IS (A) NOT TO WIRE POSITIONS AND (B) TO AVOID THE APPEARANCE OF WIRING.

(4) PROVIDE ENOUGH PUBLISHED INFORMATION TO CANDIDATES

FOR THOSE CANDIDATES WHO HAVE MADE THE FIRST CUT, IT IS GOOD PUBLIC RELATIONS TO ACCOMPANY A CONGRATULATORY LETTER WITH A RECENT VIEWBOOK AND ALL OTHER INSTITUTIONAL DATA SUMMARIES THAT CAN BE SHARED. SUCH INFORMATION GIVES THESE CANDIDATES A CHANCE TO BE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THEIR PROSPECTS FOR INTERVIEWING OR, CONVERSELY, TO WITHDRAW FROM THE RACE ENTIRELY SHOULD THERE BE SOME THING ABOUT THE SCHOOL WHICH IS UNDESIRABLE TO THEM. CERTAINLY, BY THE SECOND CUT, SEMI-FINALISTS SHOULD BE MAILED A COPY OF THE SCHOOL'S CATALOGUES AND OTHER KEY INFORMATION PIECES. WHILE SOME ENTERPRISING CANDIDATES WILL BE WILLING TO

GO TO THE LOCAL PUBLIC LIBRARY TO FISH OUT A CATALOGUE ON MICROFICHE, IT REALLY IS NOT FAIR TO EXPECT SO MUCH EFFORT FROM BUSY PEOPLE. FURTHERMORE, KAFFER INDICATES, "AGAIN AND AGAIN . . . INFORMATION . . . TARDILY RECEIVED, CAUSES [CANDIDATE] WITHDRAWAL, WASTING TIME AND MONEY."[9]

(5) PROVIDE STRONG LOGISTICAL COORDINATION OF CAMPUS VISITS

ONCE A SEARCH COMMITTEE HAS IDENTIFIED THE TOP CANDIDATES WHO MIGHT BE INVITED FOR AN INTERVIEW ON CAMPUS (AND I WOULD SUGGEST THAT THIS NUMBER NOT EXCEED TEN - - PRIMARILY IN ORDER TO AVOID CONFUSING THE INTERVIEWERS), PROFESSIONAL SECRETARIAL SUPPORT FOR THE SEARCH COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON IS ESSENTIAL. IT IS VERY UNUSUAL FOR THE CHAIR TO HAVE THE SEARCH FUNCTION ALONE. USUALLY PEOPLE GET TO CHAIR SEARCH COMMITTEES BECAUSE THEY ARE HIGHLY REGARDED FOR THEIR OTHER CAMPUS ACTIVITIES. AS SUCH, IT BECOMES THE FUNCTION OF AN EXCELLENT SUPPORT PERSON TO COORDINATE THE MULTIPLICITY OF COMMUNICATIONS THAT WILL EITHER MAKE THE

SEARCH PROCESS RUN WELL OR BECOME A COMEDY OF ERRORS. VISITING CANDIDATES NEED TO KNOW HOW THEIR VISIT WILL BE PAID FOR; WHO WILL MEET THEM AT THE AIRPORT; ANY CHANGES IN THEIR ITINERARY; THAT THEY ARE NOT LIKELY TO BUMP INTO OTHER CANDIDATES FOR THE SAME JOB. JOHN NASON REPORTS, FOR EXAMPLE, ONE EXTREME CASE OF MALFUNCTIONING LOGISTICS WHEN HE WRITES THAT " . . . ALL CANDIDATES WERE INVITED TO THE CAMPUS ON THE SAME DAY AND REPEATEDLY BUMPED INTO EACH OTHER."[10] IT SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISING THAT THE CANDIDATES FOUND THIS SCENARIO "DEMEANING AND DEGRADING."[11] INTERVIEWEES MUST SIMPLY BE GIVEN ENOUGH TIME BY SEARCH COMMITTEE MEMBERS SO THAT IT IS POSSIBLE FOR A CLEAR IMPRESSION OF THE CANDIDATES TO BE GAINED. I WOULD ALSO AGREE WITH EVANS THAT INTERVIEWS SHOULD BE SCHEDULED TIGHTLY," . . . ONE CANDIDATE PER DAY IF POSSIBLE. . . ."[12] WITH REGARD TO ENHANCING THE LOGISTICAL COORDINATION OF A VISIT I WOULD ADD ONE ADDITIONAL

RECOMMENDATION. IF THE COMMITTEE HAS DETERMINED WHO ITS STRONGEST CANDIDATES ARE (AND CAN RANK THEM, BASED ON THEIR PAPER CREDENTIALS) I WOULD OFFER THE LEADING CANDIDATES FIRST CHOICE OF INTERVIEW SLOTS. I WOULD LET THESE PEOPLE KNOW WHICH DATES ARE OPEN SO THAT THEY MIGHT BE ABLE TO CHOOSE TIMES THAT ARE BEST FOR THEM. IT IS MY HUNCH THAT CANDIDATES WHO ARE INTERVIEWED TOWARD THE END OF THE INTERVIEWING PROCESS HAVE A DISTINCT ADVANTAGE OVER THOSE WHO COME EARLIER AND ARE PRONE TO BE FORGOTTEN. BECAUSE MANY CANDIDATES ALSO SENSE THIS POSITIONING ADVANTAGE, I WOULD ALLOW AN EDGE TO THOSE INTERVIEWEES WHO HAVE ALREADY DONE THE MOST TO IMPRESS THE SEARCH COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP.

(6) <u>SAVE REQUESTS FOR EXTENSIVE PERSONAL INFORMATION UNTIL LAST</u>

IN MY EXPERIENCE, SOME SEARCH COMMITTEES GO ABOUT EXASPERATING POTENTIAL CANDIDATES WITH REQUESTS FOR TOO MUCH INFORMATION TOO EARLY IN THE PROCESS. IF YOU CAN, IN ANY WAY, AVOID ASKING INITIAL APPLICANTS AND NOMINEES FOR THEIR COLLEGE, HIGH SCHOOL, AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TRANSCRIPTS - - PLEASE DO IT. IF YOU CAN, IN

ANY WAY, AVOID ASKING FOR TOO MUCH AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL MATERIAL (SUCH AS FAVORITE HOBBIES) OR FOR A PHOTOGRAPH BEFORE THE CANDIDATE COMES TO CAMPUS - - PLEASE DO IT. I REMEMBER BEING A SEMI-FINALIST FOR A COLLEGE PRESIDENCY UNTIL THE SEARCH COMMITTEE ASKED ME FOR A RECENT PHOTOGRAPH. I MUTTERED UNDER MY BREATH BUT COMPLIED AND SENT THEM A FORMAL PICTURE. I NEVER HEARD FROM THEM AGAIN. MY WIFE AND I AGREED THAT I HAD EVERY REASON TO TAKE THAT REJECTION PERSONALLY. IF PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES ARE YOUR THING, I WOULD TAKE THE SUGGESTION OF RICHARD KAPLOWITZ WHO SUGGESTS THAT, WHEN THERE ARE MORE THAN FIVE OR SIX INTERVIEWEES, IT IS APPROPRIATE FOR THE COMMITTEE TO HAVE ON-CAMPUS POLAROID PICTURES TAKEN - - SO THAT IT IS EASIER FOR SEARCH COMMITTEES TO ASSOCIATE NAMES AND FACES.[13]

(7) MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY

THIS MAY COME AS A SHOCK TO SOME SEARCH COMMITTEE MEMBERS: NOT EVERYONE IS SO FLATTERED TO BE A CANDIDATE THAT HE OR SHE WANTS THE WORLD TO KNOW. IN FACT, I SUSPECT THAT A GREAT MANY

APPLICANTS WOULD STRONGLY PREFER NOT TO HAVE THEIR CANDIDACY KNOWN TO ALL COLLEAGUES AT THEIR HOME INSTITUTION UNTIL THE LAST POSSIBLE MOMENT. EARL W. PORTER WRITES:

> MOST OF THOSE WITH WHOM I SPOKE HAVE HAD SEVERAL EXPERIENCES IN THE RATHER HECTIC WORLD OF PRESIDENTIAL RECRUITMENT. SOME MAY HAVE PAID A PRICE FOR IT - - IN PUBLIC EMBARRASSMENT, SOME LOSS OF DIGNITY, OR DAMAGE TO THEIR CAREERS. IT IS, I BELIEVE, INSUFFICIENTLY RECOGNIZED HOW VULNERABLE THEY ARE TO THE PROCESS - - OR HOW SENSITIVE SHOULD BE THE PROCESS - - THAT FOCUSES SO STRONGLY ON THEM . . . . ALL TOO OFTEN THEY HAVE RECEIVED AN EARLY, TENTATIVE CONTACT, ALBEIT A DELICATE AND STYLISH ONE, FOLLOWED BY MONTHS OF SILENCE. THEY HAVE NO IDEA OF THEIR STATUS, AND YET THEY KNOW THAT THE PASSAGE OF TIME WITHOUT ACTION IS PRODUCTIVE OF PRESS EXPOSURE. IN LIMBO, THEY WONDER AT A SEARCH PROCESS THAT PLACES THEM IN SO VULNERABLE A POSITION . . . . THE INSTITUTION HAS NOT YET MADE UP ITS MIND AND DARES NOT RELEASE A STRONG PROSPECT TOO SOON. YET, EACH WEEK THAT PASSES HEIGHTENS THE VULNERABILITY TO PUBLICITY. MORE THAN ONE INDIVIDUAL MAY WITHDRAW - - AND THERE GOES THE LIST.[14]

VULNERABILITY DOES NOT EXTEND ONLY TO PRESIDENTS WHO FEAR PRESS RELEASES BUT ALSO PERTAINS TO DEANS, DIRECTORS AND FACULTY MEMBERS WHO CANNOT AFFORD TO BE SEEN AS ANXIOUS TO LEAVE THEIR CURRENT POSITIONS. IF A BOSS FINDS OUT SOMEONE IS SHOPPING AROUND IT MIGHT NOT BE LONG BEFORE THE BOSS, TOO, IS IN THE MARKET FOR A POTENTIAL REPLACEMENT. IN A SURVEY OF SEARCH COMMITTEE CHAIRS, WILLIAMS WRITES THAT " . . . FULLY 50% DECLARED THAT CANDIDATES, WHEN ASKED, WERE NOT OPEN AND WILLING TO HAVE THEIR PURSUIT OF ANOTHER POSITION KNOWN ON THEIR HOME CAMPUSES."[15] DAVID REISMAN TELLS OF ONE HORROR STORY. HE WRITES:

> THE COMBINATION OF SKILLFUL JOURNALISM AND POLITICAL MANEUVERING RESULTED IN THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CAREER OF AN EXCEPTIONALLY CAPABLE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT . . . [IN A STATE WHERE NEWS ABOUT] THE MAJOR STATE UNIVERSITY IS ALMOST AS IMPORTANT AS NEWS ABOUT THE GOVERNOR . . . . THE LEADING NEWSPAPER IN THE STATE WHERE THE CANDIDATE RESIDES BROKE THE STORY OF HIS CANDIDACY. IT ALSO BROKE THE CANDIDATE. THE LOCAL COMMUNITY TURNED ON HIM AND HIS FAMILY WITH WHAT COULD ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS VICIOUSNESS . . . . THE UPSHOT WAS THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS FORCED TO RESIGN DESPITE

> SUPPORT FROM THE SYSTEM HEAD. HOSTILITY WAS VENTED ON HIS CHILDREN IN SCHOOL AND ON HIS WIFE, WITH THE ACCUSATION THAT THEY MUST THINK THEMSELVES SUPERIOR TO THE LOCALITY . . . . GARBAGE WAS DUMPED AT THEIR DOOR. FURTHERMORE, ALL THIS MADE THE INDIVIDUAL SUFFICIENTLY "CONTROVERSIAL," NOT SUCCEEDING AT ONE PLACE AND BEING FORCED TO RESIGN AT ANOTHER, SO THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO SEEK ANOTHER PRESIDENCY. HE WAS FORTUNATE TO LAND A DEANSHIP AT A RELATIVELY NEW INSTITUTION.[16]

SOME LEAKS ARE SIMPLY UNAVOIDABLE. HOWEVER, THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR GREAT SENSITIVITY ON THIS ISSUE. ALL COMMUNICATIONS SHOULD BE ROUTINELY SENT TO THE CANDIDATE'S HOME ADDRESS AND ALL PHONE CALLS SHOULD BE MADE TO THE CANDIDATE'S HOME NUMBER UNLESS OTHERWISE DIRECTED BY THE CANDIDATE. AS EVANS POINTS OUT, IT DOES NO GOOD TO SEND TO THE CANDIDATE'S OFFICE ". . . AN OVERSIZED ENVELOPE MARKED 'PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL,' . . . FROM JOHN DOE COLLEGE PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH' IN BOLD FACED LETTERS . . . ."[17] HE ADDS, "THESE PROBLEMS DO NOT RESULT FROM THE MOTIVES OF SEARCH COMMITTEES. ALMOST ALL GUARANTEE CONFIDENTIALITY IN THEIR

ORIGINAL CONTACTS; THEY SIMPLY DO NOT TAKE THE TIME TO TRANSLATE INTENTIONS INTO CAREFULLY PLANNED STRATEGIES . . . ."[18] IT IS MY SUGGESTION THAT ALL MEMBERS OF THE SEARCH PROCESS, INCLUDING SECRETARIAL SUPPORT, SHOULD BE ASKED TO TAKE AT LEAST FIFTEEN MINUTES OF THEIR TIME TO DEAL SQUARELY WITH THE CONFIDENTIALITY ISSUE AND ITS LOGISTICAL APPLICATIONS.

(8) LET HONESTY GOVERN ABOVE ALL ELSE

I BELIEVE COWARDICE, IN THE GUISE OF DIPLOMACY, IS A MAJOR PITFALL IN THE SEARCH PROCESS. EVERY SCHOOL, LIKE EVERY CANDIDATE, HAS SHORTCOMINGS. ATTEMPTS TO GLOSS OVER THE PROBLEMS THAT WILL SURELY BE FACED BY THE SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE ARE ALL TOO FREQUENTLY PRACTICED, IN MY OPINION. THE TOUGH, COUNTERVAILING POLITICAL PRESSURES THAT ARE ASSOCIATED WITH TOP-LEVEL ADMINISTRATIVE JOBS NEED TO BE EXPLICATED AS CLEARLY AS POSSIBLE DURING THE SEARCH PROCESS. AS RONALD ABRELL WRITES, ". . . CANDIDATES SHOULD BE ASKED TO SHARE THE 'POSITIVES' AND 'NEGATIVES' WHICH THEY SEE IN THE SITUATION, ONCE THEY ARE INFORMED OF THE OVERALL ENVIRONMENT

AND CONDITIONS. . . ."[19] KAPLOWITZ COMES DIRECTLY TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER WHEN HE WRITES:

> HONESTY IN SHARING PROBLEMS AS WELL AS POTENTIALITIES WITH CANDIDATES IS IMPORTANT. NO COLLEGE WANTS TO HIRE AN ADMINISTRATOR WHO WILL, AFTER THREE MONTHS, FEEL "TAKEN" OR WHO WILL BE UNABLE TO COPE WITH PROBLEMS THAT WERE EVIDENT TO ALL ON CAMPUS BUT WERE NOT MENTIONED AT THE TIME OF THE INTERVIEW.[20]

ONE METHOD OF STIMULATING CANDID DISCUSSIONS IS TO BE SURE TO INCLUDE STUDENTS IN THE SEARCH PROCESS. AS YOU KNOW, MOST STUDENTS SIMPLY CANNOT BE PROGRAMMED TO ASK ENTIRELY DISCREET QUESTIONS. AND ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE "HONESTY" COIN, IS THE WILLINGNESS OF SEARCH COMMITTEE MEMBERS TO ASK TOUGH QUESTIONS OF CANDIDATES. IF THERE IS A HUNCH THAT A GIVEN CANDIDATE HAS A PARTICULAR WEAKNESS, IT DOES THE CANDIDATE NO GOOD TO GLOSS OVER THAT CONCERN. I FIND THAT TOUGH QUESTIONS ALLOW THE RESPONDENT A CHANCE TO DEVELOP HIS OR HER POSITION OPENLY - - RATHER THAN HAVING UNANSWERED SUSPICIONS COME BACK TO ELIMINATE HIM OR HER IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT POINT THAT IS MADE BY SEVERAL AUTHORS WRITING ABOUT THE SEARCH PROCESS.

(9) CHECK REFERENCES IN AN ABOVE BOARD MANNER

FRANK LUTZ OFFERS SOME INTERESTING INSIGHTS INTO THE SCREENING PROCESS WHEN HIS SURVEY LED HIM TO NOTE:

> THE USE OF AN "OLD BOY NETWORK" IS ALMOST UNIVERSALLY DENIED BY CHAIRPERSONS, BUT 59 PERCENT OF . . . COMMITTEE MEMBERS STATED THAT PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE CANDIDATE WAS "HIGHLY" OR "VERY HIGHLY" IMPORTANT IN THE FINAL DECISION. FIFTY PERCENT REPORTED THAT TELEPHONE CONTACTS WERE A VITAL ELEMENT, AND 43 PERCENT SAID THAT RECOMMENDATIONS SOUGHT BY THE COMMITTEE (NOT SUGGESTED BY THE CANDIDATE) WERE USED . . . . IN REACHING THE FINAL DECISION, THE CANDIDATE'S PUBLICATIONS [FOR EXAMPLE] WERE NOT AS IMPORTANT AS TELEPHONE CONTACTS OF PERSONS NOT SUGGESTED BY THE CANDIDATE. THIS FINDING SUGGESTS THAT THE "OLD BOY" SYSTEM IS USED MORE THAN THE PUBLIC AND OBJECTIVE RECORD ESTABLISHED IN PRINT . . . . ONLY 25 PERCENT OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS SAID RECOMMENDATIONS NOT SUGGESTED BY THE CANDIDATE WERE HIGHLY OR VERY HIGHLY IMPORTANT IN THE INITIAL SCREENING, BUT THE SITUATION WAS COMPLETELY REVERSED WHEN THE FINALISTS WERE CHOSEN. . . . THUS, THE INITIAL PROCESS IS OPEN AND RATIONAL BUT BECOMES MORE SUBJECTIVE AS IT REACHES THE LAST STAGES . . . . [21]

WHEN COVERT REFERENCE CHECKS ARE MADE, SEEMINGLY UNBEKNOWNST TO THE CANDIDATE, SEARCH COMMITTEES GET A BAD NAME. ALMOST INVARIABLY THE CANDIDATE LEARNS THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE THAT A SEARCH COMMITTEE HAS BEGUN TO CHECK REFERENCES THAT HE OR SHE HAD NOT OFFERED. I HAVE NO OBJECTION WHATEVER TO CONTACTS OR REFERENCES THAT GO BEYOND THOSE LISTED BY THE CANDIDATE - - BUT WHAT IS OBJECTIONABLE IS A COMMITTEE'S FAILURE TO ASK THE CANDIDATE'S PERMISSION TO GO ON A FISHING EXPEDITION. IF THE CANDIDATE OBJECTS HE OR SHE AT LEAST HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN WHY AND/OR WITHDRAW FROM FURTHER CONSIDERATION RATHER THAN HAVE UNDESIRABLE REFERENCES CONTACTED.

(10) KEEP THE CANDIDATE POSTED UNTIL THE END

SOME SEARCH PROCESSES LAST FOR A FEW MONTHS WHILE OTHERS SEEM INTERMINABLE. IN MORE THAN A FEW INSTANCES CANDIDATES NEVER GET TO KNOW THE FINAL RESULT OF THE SEARCH FOR WHICH THEY MAY HAVE EXPENDED CONSIDERABLE TIME. CANDIDATES SHOULD KNOW WHICH CUTS THEY MADE AND DID NOT MAKE - - AND, AS MUCH AS

POSSIBLE, THE BASIC REASONS WHY OTHER CANDIDATES MAY HAVE BEEN CHOSEN. IN LUTZ'S SURVEY, "ONLY 64 PERCENT [OF SEARCH COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS] SAID THEY NOTIFIED THE CANDIDATE POOL OF THE COMMITTEE'S FINAL SELECTION, AND ONLY 55 PERCENT STATED THAT THEY INFORMED CANDIDATES OF THEIR STATUS DURING THE PROCESS."[22] EVANS RECORDS THIS COMPLAINT:

> IN MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE, THERE WAS NO NOTIFICATION WHATEVER FROM A COMMITTEE WHICH HAD INVESTED AT LEAST TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS TRANSPORTING ME TO THE CAMPUS AND SENDING A SUB-COMMITTEE TO MY HOME COMMUNITY. AFTER A YEAR IT BECAME A FAMILY JOKE TO WONDER IF I WAS A SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE. WHEN THE TALE WAS TOLD TO A FRIEND FROM ANOTHER STATE, I LEARNED THAT HE WAS ANOTHER FINALIST - - AND ALSO HAD NEVER BEEN NOTIFIED OF THE OUTCOME.[23]

IN PUBLIC RELATIONS TERMS, THIS SORT OF TREATMENT IS CLEARLY A BUST. I WOULD GO FURTHER THAN MOST BY SUGGESTING THAT CANDIDATES WHO WOULD LIKE A REPORT CARD ON HOW WELL THEY DID SHOULD BE TREATED TO AN ACCURATE DESCRIPTION OF THEIR PERCEIVED STRENGTHS

AND WEAKNESSES. THIS NOT ONLY ALLOWS THEM TO KNOW THAT THEY WERE TAKEN SERIOUSLY BUT GIVES THEM AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN AN INVALUABLE LESSON ABOUT THEIR IMAGE - - AS WELL AS A CHANCE TO IMPROVE IN THOSE AREAS WHERE IMPROVEMENTS ARE REQUIRED FOR SUCCESSFUL COMPETITION IN OTHER SEARCHES.

IN RECRUITING CAMPUS LEADERS THERE ARE NO FORMULAE THAT WILL WORK IN ALL CASES. ON DIFFERENT CAMPUSES DIFFERENT QUESTIONS WILL NEED TO BE ASKED AND VARIOUS STYLES OF OPERATION WILL NECESSARILY OCCUR. BOTH FORMAL AND INFORMAL INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES CAN WORK IN DISPARATE SETTINGS.

WHAT ALL SEARCH COMMITTEES MEMBERS MUST COME TO REALIZE IS THAT THEY MAY NOT ONLY BE SELECTING A FUTURE COLLEAGUE (WITH WHOSE IMPRESSIONS THEY MAY HAVE TO LIVE) BUT, SOMEDAY ON ANOTHER CAMPUS, THEY MAY WELL BE AT THE OTHER END OF A SEARCH PROCESS. THEY MUST ALSO REMEMBER THAT, EVEN IF THEY PLAN TO RETIRE FROM THEIR CURRENT POSITION, THEIR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY

AND ITS PUBLIC IMAGE HAS AS MUCH AT STAKE AS THE IMAGE OF THOSE CANDIDATES WHO ALLOW THEMSELVES TO BE TESTED.

WHAT MATTERS IS NOT THE CAPACITY OF A SEARCH COMMITTEE TO SET UP A PERFECT SCENARIO BUT, IN THE PROCESS OF ATTEMPTING TO BE FAIR AND REALISTIC, THAT THE HUMANITY OF THE PROCESS IS NOT LOST.

NOTES

[1] Robert E. Kaffer, "Presidential Search: How to Ruin It," AGB Reports, v.23 (Sept./Oct. 1981), p.16.

[2] Ed Kiersh, "Presidential Searches: Divided We Stand," Change. v.11 (Sept. 1979), p.30.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Glen D. Williams, "The Search for Dr. Perfect," AGB Reports, v.18 (July/Aug. 1976), p.39.

[5] Byron F. Evans, "Bill of Rights for Search Committees," College and University Personnel Association Journal, v.27 (Jan./Feb. 1976), pp.14-15.

[6] Ronald L. Abrell, "The Educational Leadership Musical Chairs Game," Contemporary Education, v.49 (Summer 1978), p. 199.

[7] Commission on Strengthening Presidential Leadership, "Summary of Suggestions by Commission on Leadership, in "The Chronicle of Higher Education, (Sept. 1984), p.28.

[8] Ed Kiersh, p.30.

[9] Robert E. Kaffer, p.17.

[10] John W. Nason, Presidential Search: A Guide to the Process of Selecting and Appointing College and University Presidents (ERIC ED 238 358), P.55.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Byron F. Evans, p.19.

[13] Richard A. Kaplowitz, Selecting Academic Administrators: The Search Committee (ERIC ED 088 387), p.25.

[14] Earl W. Porter, "The Presidential Search As the Presidents See It," AGB Reports, v.25 (Jan./Feb. 1983), pp.43-44.

[15] Glenn D. Williams, p.43.

[16] David Reisman, "Selection Procedures for College and University Presidents: Search and Destroy Missions?" School of Education, Boston College, Boston (1983), pp.18-20.

[17] Byron F. Evans, p.14.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ronald L. Abrell, p.199.

[20] Richard A. Kaplowitz, p.25.

[21] Frank W. Lutz, "The Deanship: Search and Screening Process," Educational Record, v.60 (Summer 1979), pp.264-265.

[22] Ibid. p.263.

[23] Byron F. Evans, p. 17.